

*Amendments to the Abstract*

Please replace the pending abstract with the following:

~~The present invention includes a~~ A lithography system ~~comprising~~ includes a lithography patterning chamber, a wafer exchange chamber separated from the lithography patterning chamber by a first gate valve, and at least one alignment load-lock separated from the wafer exchange chamber by a second gate valve. The alignment load-lock includes an alignment stage that aligns a wafer during pump-down. ~~An~~ The alignment load-lock ~~according to the present invention~~ can be uni-directional or bi-directional. ~~Likewise, a~~ The lithography system ~~according to the present invention~~ can include more than one ~~or multiple~~ alignment load-locks. ~~Also disclosed is a method of patterning a wafer within a lithography system. The method can include a first step of placing the wafer on supports within an alignment load lock. In a next step, the wafer is aligned with respect to a chuck while the wafer is supported within the alignment load lock on the supports. In another step, the wafer is secured to the chuck. And in yet another step, pump down is performed to create a vacuum within the alignment load lock.~~